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SUBJECT: MACEDONIA: 2009-2010 INSCR PART I

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Summary

1) Macedonia is neither a major producer nor a major regional transit point for illicit drugs. The Government of Macedonia (GOM) continues to make progress in combating drug trafficking, evidenced by the fact that illicit drug seizures in Macedonia increased during the first nine months of 2009. Macedonian law enforcement authorities cooperated with regional counterparts, including Serbia, Bulgaria, and Turkey. The lack of an authorized drug enforcement agency in Kosovo has somewhat hindered Macedonia's cooperation with its newest neighbor, but the Macedonian Ministry of Interior (MOI) works with third-country representatives in Kosovo on counternarcotics operations. There have been significant improvements in interagency coordination compared to the previous year, resulting in only a small number of operational problems due to lack of coordination. Macedonia is a party to the 1988 UN Drug Convention.

Status of Country

2) Macedonia is one of several Balkan drug routes used to deliver Afghan heroin (through Turkey and Bulgaria) to Western Europe. Hashish and marijuana produced in Albania travel along the same Macedonian routes to Turkey and Greece. Synthetic drugs on the Macedonian market are smuggled in from neighboring Bulgaria and Serbia and also from the Netherlands. Illegal commercial marijuana is cultivated in fields in northwest Macedonia, while small amounts of marijuana is cultivated for personal use in southern Macedonia, where the climate is favorable. According to government sources, there was no production of precursor chemicals or synthetic drugs, nor illicit drug production facilities of significance in Macedonia. According to MOI sources, trafficking in synthetic drugs remained at a similarly low level to 2008. Seizures, however, were significantly higher this year. Macedonia produced licit poppy straw and poppy straw concentrate on approximately 500 hectares of its territory, but in quantities insufficient for the country's pharmaceuticals industry. As a result, some poppy straw was imported under license.

Country Actions against Drugs in 2008

4) Macedonia's National Anti-drug Strategy, approved in 2006, was followed in May 2007 by a National Action Plan for implementing that strategy, which in turn was succeeded by the current 2008-2012 Action plan for implementation. A 2008 Law on Control of Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances improved drug enforcement efforts and interagency cooperation, which resulted in an increase in seizures and better cooperation between Customs officials and agencies.

5) According to MOI statistics, in the first nine months of 2009, criminal charges were brought against 359 persons (268 for Jan-Sept 2008)-a total of 91 more cases than in the same period of 2008. Of these persons charged, 288 were cases of illicit drug trafficking, including 21 cases in the largest prison in the country. In 2009, police seizures of illicit drugs increased significantly compared to the previous year. MOI sources claim that Macedonia, especially the

northwestern areas, continues to be used as a wholesale drug depot. The Macedonian MOI has significantly improved cooperation and communication with its counterparts in Austria, Bulgaria, Serbia, and Turkey. MOI sources and intelligence contributed to the seizure of 111 kilograms of heroin in Bulgaria, resulting in the arrests of three people, and the seizure of 16 kilograms of heroin in Serbia. The Macedonian MOI has cooperated on two successful controlled deliveries in Turkey, and a Macedonian-led initiative resulted in the bust of a group of dealers in Austria and a conviction of 14 people.

6) The MOI reported the following quantities of drugs and psychotropic substances seized in the first nine months of 2009 (2008 figures are also Jan-Sept):
Heroin: 112 kilograms (26.1 kg in 2008);
Marijuana: 720kg (10.6 kg in 2007); Cannabis: 403 plants (268 plants the previous year);
Hashish: 123 grams (30 grams in 2008);
Ecstasy: 2618 pills (290 pills seized in 2008)

7) Customs Administration continued to strengthen its intelligence units and mobile teams. Police officials claimed cooperation with their Customs colleagues significantly improved compared to past years.

8) Corruption is widespread in Macedonia, with low salaries fostering graft among law enforcement officials and the judiciary, which remains weak. As a matter of policy and practice, the Government of the Republic of Macedonia does not encourage or facilitate the illicit production or distribution of drugs, or the laundering of proceeds from illegal drug transactions.

9) Macedonia is a party to the 1988 UN Drug Convention, the 1961 Single Convention as amended by the 1972 Protocol, and the 1971 Convention on Psychotropic Substances. A 1902 Extradition Treaty between the United States and Serbia, applies to Macedonia as a successor state of the former Yugoslavia. Macedonia is a party to the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its protocols against trafficking in persons, migrant smuggling, and trafficking in illicit firearms. In April 2007 Macedonia acceded to the UN Convention against Corruption.

10) Macedonia is neither a major cultivator nor producer of illicit narcotics. There are no reports of local illicit production or refining of heroin or illegal synthetic drugs. Only one pharmaceutical company in the country was authorized to licitly cultivate and process poppy for medicines. Authorized poppy production, some 500 hectares in 2009, is monitored by the Ministry of Health, which shares production data regularly with the Vienna-based International Narcotics Control Board. Illicit marijuana cultivation in southeast Macedonia continued mostly for personal consumption. However, in 2009, MOI officials noted a new trend in northwest Macedonia, where the illicit cultivation of marijuana is occurring in greenhouses and fields for sale on both the domestic and foreign markets.

11) Macedonia is on the southern branch of the Balkan Route used to ship Afghan heroin to the western European consumer market. The quantity of synthetic narcotics trafficked to Macedonia in 2009 probably remained the same, judging by the stability of the street price. Most synthetic drugs aimed at the Macedonian market originated in Bulgaria, Serbia, and the Netherlands, and arrived in small amounts by vehicle.

12) Official Macedonian statistics regarding drug abuse and addiction are unreliable, but they are improving with the opening of the National Center, triggered by efforts to reach European standards in narcotics control policies. Ministry of Health officials estimated there were some 9,000 drug users in the country. The most frequently used drug was marijuana, followed by heroin. There were an estimated 600 or fewer cocaine users in the country in 2009, according to official sources. Treatment and rehabilitation activities are carried out in eleven state-run outpatient medical clinics for drug users. These clinics supervise methadone maintenance therapy for registered heroin addicts. One of the eleven centers is located in the largest prison in the country (with over 60 percent of the country's total prisoner population). Of the 1,500 prisoners in the country's main prison, an estimated 380 were

identified as drug addicts, mainly addicted to heroin. Macedonian health officials acknowledged that rehabilitation centers were overcrowded. In-patient treatment in specialized facilities consisted of detoxification accompanied by medicinal/vitamin therapy, as well as limited family therapy, counseling and social work. Follow-up services after detoxification, or social reintegration programs for treated drug abusers were inadequate. There were only three centers for social reintegration and rehabilitation.

U.S. Policy Initiatives and Programs

13) During 2009, DEA agents worked with the Macedonian police to support coordination of regional counternarcotics efforts. Financial police, Customs officers, prosecutors, and judges continued to receive USG-funded training in anti-organized crime operations and techniques. USG representatives continued to provide training, technical advice, equipment, and other assistance to Macedonian Customs and MOI Border Police units.

14) Macedonia's porous borders, and the influence of regional narcotics trafficking groups, will continue to make the country an attractive secondary route for the transit of illegal drugs. The United States Government, through law enforcement training programs, will continue to work to strengthen the ability of Macedonian police, prosecutors and judges to monitor, arrest, prosecute, and sanction narcotics traffickers. In cooperation with EU and other international community partners, the U.S. will press for continued successful implementation of the national counternarcotics action plan. USG law enforcement training agencies in Macedonia will encourage the preparation of new laws to strengthen the ability of prosecutors to successfully pursue counternarcotics cases. The USG will continue to work with the GOM and international partners to strengthen Macedonia's criminal intelligence system, and to improve the government's ability to provide reliable statistics on drug use, arrests, prosecutions, and convictions of traffickers.

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